

"Ut omnes unum sint."

THE ANNUAL CALL OF THE Church Unity Octave

In collaboration with the C.U.O. Committee in America

EIGHT DAYS OF PRAYER FOR REUNION — 1950.

From the *Feast of St. Peter's Chair at Rome, January 18th*, to the *Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle of the Nations, January 25th*.

"I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one: that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them even as thou lovedst me." S. John xvii, 23.

It is only by the reunion of all Christians into the Visible Kingdom of Christ, preserved in Unity by the Chair of St. Peter, the central See of Christendom at Rome, that the will of Our Lord can be fulfilled and that the power of the Church can be directed, without the present waste and rivalry, to the conversion of the whole world by the One Faith to Christ our King.

THE behaviour of the governments of Eastern Europe in the face of Catholic opposition to Communism provides an enlightening gloss on the religious history of our own country, and might almost have been, inspired by a study of English history. The rulers of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, determined to bring everything including the Church within their power, have decided upon a common policy. Before much can be done to subdue and stultify the Church the vital link between the local Sees and the Apostolic See in Rome must be broken. To this end the monasteries are closed, laws are passed which make religious integrity to be treason, the Bishops imprisoned and attempts made to set up national churches independent of Rome.

All this reads familiarly to English people. It is just what Henry VIII did here four centuries ago. He did the same things in order to achieve the same ends, to bring the Church completely within his control and to use it as a docile instrument for his own purposes. Henry's efforts were rewarded with a fairly complete success. The contemporary efforts may also achieve some success, though we will hope that the Catholics in these Eastern lands will also have studied history and will know how to meet guile with steadfastness. But the faithful and intelligent Catholic will perceive that whatever success the Communists may have, and however long they may be able to maintain the rift between their subjects and the Holy See, the tide at last will turn and the broken links be renewed.

This is what is happening in our own land. After having been withheld from all intercourse with the Holy See for four centuries the English people are being again brought within its orbit. The tide is turning and there is a prospect of the evils of four hundred years being repaired.

When calling upon our neighbours to interest themselves in this process we must catalogue the forces which have kept and which keep our people from re-uniting with Rome. They are chiefly four—penal laws, ignorance, public opinion and church organisation. For nearly two centuries the penal laws were operative. Those brave men who tried to bring the Papal Authority back to England and to establish it here could be, and mostly were, barbarously executed. There were penalties against the Roman Catholics and penalties to support the established Church by punishing all its opponents. These penalties were highly effective and succeeded in driving all exhibition of the full faith into remote hidden corners. With the advent of the free-thinking Georgian period these penalties fell out of favour and now are no longer an obstacle. It is not at all the same with regard to the ignorance of our people, which remains a force to be reckoned with. The facts concerning which English people as a whole are ignorant are those which belong to the history and functions of the Papacy. Beyond question for centuries the truth about the Papacy has been glossed over, misrepresented and twisted out of recognition. At first, no doubt, this was done deliberately in order to detach the affections of English Christians from the Holy See and later it became traditional. When a tradition of "No Popery" had been built up it was then inevitable that history and theology should be presented with a strong anti-Papal bias. So the ordinary Anglican knows nothing of the arguments from Scripture and tradition in support

of the Petrine claims, nothing of the position accorded the Pope in patristic times and nothing of the unity of faith which everywhere belongs to the Roman obedience. Yet here there is a certain expanding brightness which suggests the nearness of a new dawn. The bitter malevolent phrases which were formerly applied to the Pope are now no longer heard and no one would now think of burning him in effigy. The English people have advanced from believing that the Papacy is an unmixed evil to believing that it would be an evil for themselves but is very well for the Latin races or for those who like it. Public opinion, always depending on the state of public knowledge or ignorance, is then slowly changing, and while there are few signs that it accepts the Papacy it has at any rate lost the keen edge of its prejudice. There remains what may prove to be the greatest obstacle, the Anglican Church organisation. The Anglican Communion has been much organized and is indeed now becoming over organized. Will it be possible to bring the Church of England with its present statutory connection with the Civil Power into obedience to the Holy See? Here is the crux of our problem and the point of our call to prayer. While it would be a rash thing to forecast how God will do it, we yet believe that God can do it, does will it and will bring it to pass.

At this point we must remind our readers what we are after. We are trying to get back to the pure, original Christianity which we have in some measure lost. The lost part which we as a society especially seek is the union of all Christians within the embrace of the Roman See. This we see to be an essential part of the Gospel which our Saviour preached and which the Apostles took as the foundation of the Church. When Christ said that he would build his Church upon the rock and that he would give to Peter, the Rock, the Keys of Heaven and the power to bind and loose, it is plain to us that he was committing his Church to the care of St. Peter and his successors in the See of Rome. To Peter he gave the task of strengthening and feeding his faithful. For the past four centuries we Anglicans, as well as many others, have been deprived of this strength and aliment. Hence our contemporary heresies, confusions and schisms. We desire to return to the filial and canonical union with the Holy See which was part of English Christianity for a thousand years until it was roughly taken from us by the State. We desire, also, to spread an interest in this work among our fellow Christians and to unite with them in prayer to this end.

In regard to a detailed policy of re-union none has been formulated nor is yet possible. We hope that the Church of

England with its ministry and organization may be brought back into the Catholic unity. The only essentials in this unity are that the Pope's infallibility in matters of Faith and Morals be recognized and that he be accorded a general oversight in the life of the Church, which need mean no more than that he should intervene if anything went gravely wrong. There are already bodies of Christians living in union with the Holy See but which have little daily contact with it and no intervention from it. No doubt, if re-union came near there would be all kinds of bargaining, constitutional safeguards, recognition of traditional ways of life and adaptations to circumstances readily accorded by the Holy See. There is no need to fear that we should have to un-English ourselves and become uneasy reflections of Irish or Italian Catholics. We should probably remain much as we are in regard to our daily religion, but with the comforting knowledge that we should be protected from heresy and no longer liable to be punished for promoting the true Gospel if we are priests, or to see it wrested from us if we are laymen. If the people seemed to wish it no doubt the Holy Father would be content to see very little of us and to leave us to our own devices, though all the evidence to hand suggests that once our people come to believe in the Pope's authority they become ardent lovers of the Holy See and therefore the commerce between it and England and sister countries would be as frequent and enthusiastic as it was in ancient times.

But, however this may be, we must give the first loyalty of our minds to the essentials of the case. Our Lord declared that he committed his Church to the care of Peter, which the Catholic religion has ever taken to mean the care of the Apostolic See of Rome. We who have been forced away from that care have been given the grace to see that it is time we returned to it, not helter-skelter, but prudently and with regard to all the facts of the case. For this we pray and would invite the prayers of others, not only during the January Octave, when our prayers are given the fervour and urgency which belong to such concerted efforts, but at all times.

The dogmatic position of the Church Unity Octave Council is summarised in the following statements:—

- (1) The conversion of the world depends upon the Visible Unity of the Church of God, for our Saviour prayed "That they all may be one . . . that the World may believe."

- (2) He provided the means for the maintenance of this Unity by the appointment of a visible head of the visible Body: "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church."

History has shown what interpretation the Church has given to this text, for none other has ever been the Church's acknowledged head upon earth but he who sits on Peter's Throne. Separation from this centre of Unity has always led the separated into further schisms, while acknowledgment of it by all must necessarily result in the healing of all divisions.

- (3) The dogmatic decrees that concern the supremacy of St. Peter's successor and his infallibility in Faith and Morals, while not capable of being rescinded even by the Pope himself, do nevertheless admit of elucidation and further definition such as would make their general acceptance by the Catholic-minded inevitable.
- (4) Further, it may be hoped that many vital and important matters left over at the Vatican Council, such as those concerning the mystical nature of the Church, will eventually be considered and issue in such definitions as may bring out the true balance of the doctrine concerning the relationship between the successor of St. Peter and the rest of the Apostolic Episcopate and the body of the faithful.

It is to these statements or "Premisses" that we invite all priests to send in their signatures as giving "entire support."

DAILY INTENTIONS.

- Jan. 18.—*St. Peter's Chair at Rome.* The return of all the "other sheep" to the "One flock, under one Shepherd."
- „ 19.—Reunion of the Eastern and Western Churches.
- „ 20.—The repairing of the 16th century breach between England and Rome.
- „ 21.—The return of Lutheran and other European Protestants to Holy Church.
- „ 22.—The return of all dissenters to Holy Church.
- „ 23.—The return to the Holy Sacraments of lapsed Catholics.
- „ 24.—The Conversion of the Jews and Moslems.
- „ 25.—*Conversion of St. Paul.* The Missionary conquest of the whole world for Christ the King.

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